

Malachi Ch 2:1-17

"Giving Glory To God's Name"

Peter wrote, "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"¹ In other words, if God deals so "matter of factly" w/those who belong to Him, what will be the end of those who have disdained &/or rejected Him?

The point being that "Yes" God is gracious, God is loving, God is full of mercy & compassion. However, that does not in any way annul the fact that God is holy, He is righteous & He is just. Therefore, He won't sit idly by and simply tolerate sin or compromise & transgression in the lives of His children. There is a spiritual law of sowing & reaping & it's simply unavoidable, to sow to the wind is to reap the whirlwind. & Truth be told (as we established last week) it's the deep passionate love of God *for* us that inspires the correcting hand of God to *visit* us.

I say all that to say this. Here in the book of Malachi, since the 6th Vs of the 1st Ch God has been dealing w/the priesthood of Israel. Judgment beginning (literally) at the house of God. **But let's not think for a minute that w/the kind of compromise represented in the priest that it's not taking place among the people. To the contrary we might say, "As goes the *priests* so go the *people*."** Generally speaking, people will never rise higher than their leaders, if the representatives of God are living in such sinful compromise, how then do you suppose the "average everyday individual" is living?

Now; as for you & me, though the *interpretation* belongs to the priests of ancient Israel, there's all kinds of *application* for us. 1 Pet Ch 2, Rev Ch 5, both speak *of* & shed light *on* the fact that in Christ God has made us kings & priests, a holy nation & royal priesthood to our God. So as we study such passages, our heart/mind shouldn't be reasoning along the lines of, "Wow, they were really messed up!" But rather, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting."²

Vs 1-4

Don't gloss over that last phrase of Vs 4. God here shares the heart behind His dealings w/them. It's not simply to shame or somehow humiliate them. But that they might come to their senses, repent & return to Him. That they might recognize the error of their ways so that the covenant w/Levi (the priesthood) can continue.

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Pe 4:17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ps 139:23-24). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Again, it's that sowing & reaping, cause and effect principle in play. The reason you discipline your children is so that they learn that certain choices carry negative consequences. If you & I can recognize the value in that, how much more will God discipline *His children*? What does the Bible say? *For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.*³ & Again, *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.*⁴

So here in Vs 2 God reminds them of the illustrations & exhortations of Ch 1, (how it is that they've dishonored & defiled Him & what they need to do to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance). & He says, "If you won't hear it, if you won't take it to heart..." Guys, I can't say it or stress it enough, God wants *us* to take *His word to heart*. How do I know if I've taken His word to heart, how do I know it's gone beyond merely rolling around in my mind? (We mentioned this last week), it's when we go beyond simply being *challenged* to being *changed*. If we stop at the door of being *challenged* by God's word & don't pass through the threshold of *change* then we've not taken His word to heart...

I believe (if we will have ears to hear) God will be faithful to *challenge* us every time we gather. But the true question isn't so much, "How has God challenged you" as it is, "How has God *changed* you?" It doesn't stop at, "What did I learn?" The true test is, "What am I going to do about it?"

God says, "If you won't take it to heart, *to give glory to My name*," That is (to keep the context [& if you *weren't* here last week, do yourself the service of downloading/listening to that study]) if they won't *honor* Him in their sacrifice & service *to* Him... Let's remind ourselves that w/God it's not only *what* we give, or in *what way* we serve, but *why* we do it! We're to *think about* our service & sacrifice to Him. We're to yield our very best to Him. & He says here that if they weren't willing to do that, He would send a curse (or more literally "the curse") & curse their blessings.

What does that mean? It seems to me to point to Deut 27 & 28:15-68. God had promised Israel that abundant blessing would be the fruit of *obedience* & a curse (hardships both personally & nationally) would be the yield of *disobedience*. Those things that were meant to be a blessing to the priesthood through the tithe of the people would be radically diminished & brought to nothing because the ground would cease to produce. & Virtually every artery of blessing would be blocked & the floodgates of *disaster* (both nationally & in their lives/families personally) would be opened in full force.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Heb 12:6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Re 3:19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& God tells them that they're beginning to feel the effect of that already, because up to this point, *they haven't* taken His word to heart. Their sacrifice/service to God had been reduced to hollow formalism (that mechanical indifference), surface emotions, outward expression, but inward indifference, not serving/worshiping God from the heart.

He goes on to say, "Because you've ignored *My* word, I will ignore *your* children. I will rebuke *your* seed." Here's the take-away. Our attitude *toward* the Lord, the way we view sacrifice & service *for* the Lord impacts our kids... They hear our conversations, see what happens when the curtain is pulled back, they know if we truly consider it a blessing to serve God, or if it's a burden (a draining, cumbersome, bothersome affliction) & that builds into them one way or the other.

God says, "I'll spread refuse on your faces." (This is one facial mudpack that you want to avoid ☺)... "The refuse of your solemn feasts." When people would bring animals to sacrifice, it wasn't much different than field dressing a deer or something, the excrement was still in their system. & God had told them that all the waste was to be taken outside the sanctuary to be burned.

God is saying, "I'm going to render you unclean just the same so that you'll be cast out of service as well. If serving Me is such a burden, then I'll just remove you (& your descendants) & be done w/it." God's purpose being that once they were no longer *serving* the Lord, they would realize the error of their ways, repent & return *to* the Lord. That's the idea behind Vs 4. God's heart is to purify the priesthood so that they might have a proper respect for His covenant w/Levi (the priestly tribe) that they might continue in it.

Again, for the sake of repetition; God's heart behind His rebuke, His exhortation, never ends at condemnation, the desired end is *restoration*.

Vs 5-7

"My covenant was w/him." God (through Jacob) foretold that Levi's descendants would be scattered in Israel (Gen 49:7). However, what seemed to be something negative, God turned to something positive when Levi was designated as the priestly tribe because it amounted to them being essentially "sprinkled" throughout the land.

They were accessible to the nation, to teach them the ways & the word of God & that's what they did. God says, "My covenant was w/him, one of life & peace; & I gave them to him (why) that he might fear Me." (Notice), "So *he* feared Me & was reverent before My name." God is saying, "This is what a *right response* to a relationship w/Me looks like... I give *you* life & peace, you give *Me* reverence & honor."

Family, one of the most prolific lies (productive lies) of the devil is that God is in the business of making life miserable. The truth of the matter is just the opposite, He has given you a covenant (in Christ) of *life & peace*. The Psalmist said, *"You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."*⁵ What's the truth of being set apart to God? "Life, joy & pleasure forevermore." Satan came to steal, to kill & to destroy. Jesus came that we might have life (& that more abundantly). The enemy wants you to believe those things are found in a life of sin & rebellion, the truth is that they're found in honoring/obeying the word of God!

When God established Levi as the priestly tribe initially, he responded appropriately. He honored, feared & revered God. Studied God's word, dealt w/people justly, walked w/God in peace, w/integrity & taught people accurately, turned many away from iniquity.

The reason God is telling them this is so that they can see how far they've fallen. This is the way they used to be, it's how to serve God appropriately. They're just the opposite of all these things (at this point in their history).

Family, this is the 3rd thing God informs them of by which they've dishonored Him. (Vs 6, The law of truth was in his mouth, he turned many away from iniquity). Listen, they had failed to honor God in their *service*, in their *sacrifice* (as seen in Ch 1) & in their *study* of His word... No heart to teach the people (they didn't have a burden to honor God *personally*, much less study to teach others *accurately*). But this is their responsibility, isn't it? To uphold the word, to encourage others *in* the word, to share & spread the scripture.

"For the lips of a priest *should* keep knowledge. & People *should* seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts." Listen, God's leaders *should be knowledgeable* messengers of God's word! This is why Paul told Timothy, *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*⁶

Listen, I say this w/all due respect & as much tenderness as I can muster, but the primary responsibility of the pastor isn't public relations. It's to study & teach the *word* of God to the *people* of God. God has given the pastor/teacher to the church for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:12). Allow me say this as well. Though it's true that your pastor *should* have a significant working knowledge of the word of God...

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ps 16:11]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [2 Ti 2:15]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& you *should* be able to go *to* him & seek godly insight *from* him (because as we just established, God's called him to equip the saints). Equally true, however, is the fact that in Malachi's day, not everyone had access to God's written word. If they wanted to know what God's word had to say concerning a situation, they had to obtain that knowledge from the priests!

Not so w/you, you have the scripture readily/easily available to you in multiple translations, transliterations, interpretations & more! So, don't think that when it comes to the responsibility to know God's word, that somehow that's just left up to your pastor. ("If I want to know what the bible says, I'll just ask the pastor, that's why he gets paid.") No; no a thousand times, no! The pastor doesn't get paid to alleviate *your* responsibility before God to study/know His word! But rather to encourage/exhort you to be *true* to that responsibility, to *study* God's word & respond in obedience *to* God's word.

Listen, people around *you* (maybe your kids, your spouse, someone you work with or see around school) may have a question for *you*. You should strive to be equipped w/answers from the word of God... Do your lips keep knowledge? Can people seek God's word from your mouth?

Vs 8-9

You see? There was a time when the priesthood was representing accurately, responding to the covenant appropriately. But God says, "Now, *you've departed from the way...*" This is the wrong response, rather than turning many away from iniquity, they've caused many to stumble at the law... Rather than having lips that served as a treasure trove of truth, they themselves were misrepresenting the word, the truth & the standards of God... which caused others to stumble! Turned them off & turned them away from God!

Here's the take-away; when we (as professed believers) step out of line w/God's word, we trip others up. We leave a bad taste in their mouth for the things of God. We say we believe one thing, but our lives model something different... We don't uphold the word in reverence, our lives aren't marked by obedience & that turns people off, turns them away from God... It's God's desire that we lead lives that represent Him accurately, that our light shines in such a way that He's glorified & people are drawn to Him, not abhorred & turned away from Him.

He says, "I've made you contemptible & base before the people." In other words, "They see through you, they have no respect for you because you don't honor My word."

Vs 10

Ok; this isn't saying that we all share God as our Father in the sense of universal salvation. But rather, we share Him in common w/regard to *creation*. The bible is clear (Jesus made it clear) that the devil has his children to... But by the simple fact that every human being is the creation of God, there should be a mutual respect toward one another.

But rather than acting respectfully, (he says) so often we deal w/one another treacherously... & He's gonna tell us what he's speaking of specifically.

Vs 11-12

Family, there's no way around this, God speaks very clearly as to how He feels about the institution of marriage & what's taking place when we don't honor it. 1st of all we need to understand that as it pertains to marriage, it wasn't man's idea, it was *God's* idea.

God is the One who both instituted & ordained the marriage union. Genesis Ch 2. God created the woman *from* the man, brought her *to* the man & bound them together as one. Gen 2:24, *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."*⁷ Notice the union was 1 man & 1 woman; this is God's design, God's desire & God's intent for the marriage union.

& Because God is Holy, & marriage is His institution (guess what)? It is *His holy institution* (notice) which He *loves*. God *loves* the institution of marriage. For a # of reasons. It was to be a picture of God's relationship w/Israel, it ultimately points people to the relationship of Jesus & the church. The church is called "the Bride" of Christ. He loves, leads, provides, takes care of us, serves & gives Himself *for* us, is faithful *to* us, & we honor Him, submit ourselves *to* Him, remain *loyal* to Him, follow *after* & *esteem* Him.

So when the marriage vows are sinned against, it's no small thing, is it? Note the words God uses here. Words like "treachery", "abomination" & "profaned" or "polluted". These are the ways we violate God's holy institution of marriage when we sin against the marriage vows...

But guys, this is why we're not allowed to define marriage however we see fit. If it were man's idea somewhere along the way, & we just decided to spend our lives w/one another faithfully, exclusively for whatever reason... then I suppose we could do whatever we wanted, marry whoever/whatever we wanted. Afterall, it's nothing more than a mutual agreement to spend our lives together... But marriage wasn't *man's* idea, it was *God's holy institution*, therefore, for it to truly be marriage, it must conform to the standards that He has defined & established.

⁷ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [\(Ge 2:24\)](#). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& It's no secret that good marriages (not perfect marriages, they don't exist) are good for society, for our families & God uses them to even help us grow spiritually.

But Judah (the tribe) had violated God's ordinance in marrying daughters of a foreign God. Listen, time forbids but the dangers & disastrous results of God's people marrying the ungodly are well documented in both the Old & New Testament. Ungodly women took Solomon's heart from God (1 Kings 11:1-10). Ahab married Jezebel (a foreign woman) & Israel was led into new depths of depravity (1 Kings 16:29-33). In 2 Cor 6:14-18 Paul is clear that believers aren't to yoke themselves together w/unbelievers in the marriage union.

(I should also say [however] that if you find yourself in that situation, he's equally clear that you shouldn't seek to get out of it, but rather be faithful to your vows. If the unbeliever departs, then they depart, but as for you, remain faithful as unto the Lord).

But the point here (Vs 12) is that they were only deceiving themselves if they thought that they could dishonor God on the one hand & it not affect their relationship w/Him & their service to Him on the other... Dealing treacherously, profanely & then bringing an offering to the Lord like all is well... all is not well!

I should also say this, it wasn't a racial thing, it was a spiritual thing. It's an issue of remaining loyal to God & His purpose/plan for our lives. (In Israel's case, God was going to use them to bring the Messiah into the world & anything less than obedience would work against His plan of salvation & ultimately play into the hands of the enemy!)

Vs 13-16

Couple thoughts behind Vs 13 (both probably valid). One being as we stated, these men dealing treacherously w/their wives (putting them away & marrying ungodly women) & then coming & weeping, bringing offering to God as though they could simply come a seek forgiveness & all would be well.

God says, "I'm not playing your games. I see what's happening in your heart. If you were truly repentant, you'd repair the relationship w/your wife! Not forsake them for some ungodly woman!" They were being hypocritical in their worship & God was ready to cut them off!

The other thought is that it was their wives whom they'd divorced crying out to God, covering the altar w/tears & then there exhusband would come like nothing was wrong & try to sacrifice to God like things were good... But God says, "I'm not going to receive your offering anymore!" They're all, "Why?"

Vs 14

Listen husband, if you think that the way you treat your wife has no bearing on the rest of your life (much more your walk & relationship w/God) you're only deceiving yourself. (1 Pet 3:7)

& To be bold, just because divorce may be legal, that doesn't make it biblical... Are there cases where grounds may be biblical? Yes (sexual immorality, desertion by the unbeliever). But unhappiness, inconvenience, poverty or incompatibility aren't biblical grounds... When you said, "I do, for better or worse, in sickness & in health, richer or poorer till death do us part." Those were vows you made before God!

You've become one w/your spouse! Why did God ordain it this way? One reason (He says in Vs 15) was for the sake of godly offspring. Godly marriages establish a proper atmosphere for raising godly children. Family, you've probably heard it before... 63% of youth suicides... fatherless homes, 90% of runaways, 71% of high school dropouts, 70% of juveniles in detention centers, 75% of adolescent patients in substance abuse centers, 75% of rapists motivated by displaced anger... they all share the same thing, fatherless homes.

Is it any wonder that God *hates* divorce? "Therefore, take heed to your spirit, & let no one deal treacherously w/the wife of his youth." Might write down & read later Eph 5:28. To love your wife is to love yourself, you are one, take heed to *your* spirit in tending to your marriage relationship! God repeats that twice! Take heed to your spirit! Put the work into your relationship to repair & restore it, it will serve you well.

Now; why the mention of the "garment" & the "violence"? In ancient times they didn't put a ring on a woman's finger to propose, but the man would cover her w/the corner of his garment (like Boaz did for Ruth, Ruth 3:9).

But in divorcing his wife, rather than a garment of love & protection, it becomes a garment of violence, a tearing in two of that which was one... So; God hates divorce, but He doesn't hate the divorced. Let's remember the point to all this was to work both challenge & change, that they might honor Him, return & be restored to Him in truth.

Vs 17

We will lean into this next time...

Prayer Points:

God, Your word is true, Your word is faithful & we want to be those who respond in a right way. To honor You in service, in sacrifice & in study. To honor You in our marriages. So I pray for the marriages represented here today, if there be any in need of repair or restoration that there be an openness on both ends for Your corrective hand in our lives. That we love one another as You have loved us & given Yourself for us. Give us a heart & hunger for Your ways, & Your word... that we might give glory to Your name. & we'll give You praise.

The covenant of God that He offers you in Christ is one of life... & peace. Find forgiveness of sin, newness of life & true peace in Him today. Salvation awaits, turn from your sin, trust in Jesus.